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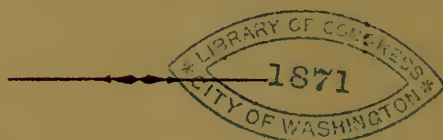
Lavona.

LAVONA:

A Poem.

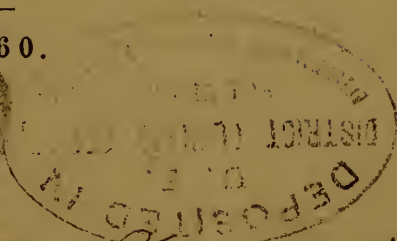
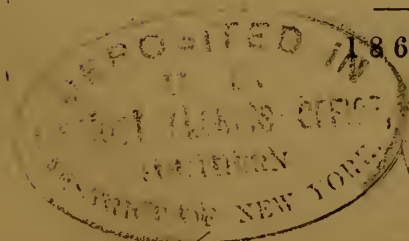
BY HUGH F. ^{McDermott} McDERMOTT.

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PREFACE.

IN this poem I have intentionally deviated from the common course of rythm. My government has been my own. Dactyls and anapests are all mixed together. As the thought came to me I clothed it in its own raiment, without patching, or looking for dress that would not fit it. The word should suit the thought, and not, as is generally the case, the thought *try* to suit the word.



LAVONA.

A Poem.

PART I.

BENEATH the blandness of Italian skies,
Where Love's sweet passion ne'er by virtue dies,
I take my wand, and as unseen I sail,
From vale and cloister draw my future tale.

I.

LAVONA—idol of a doting heart,
Long have thy dimpled smiles and simple art

Removed the cloud from old Zignoli's brow,
And waked a joy which care might not allow.
Where'er thou moved or breathed or turned a limb
The very air was incense unto him.

II.

The soul that dwelt ere love's first noon was o'er
In that dark vault which Sadness can't explore,
And bore the shock ere it could heave a sigh,
Of all it loved expire before its eye,
May form the aspect of the moment's gloom
When fair Lavona quit Zignoli's room.
A thousand thoughts press on his troubled mind :
Now, in what look he thinks, was he unkind.
Her passive frown (by it he's self-condemned,)
Was like the clouded moon when silvery hemmed.

III.

Wary to be of men and other things
Zignoli wished her, and love's well of springs ;
Told how Cupid, instead of to the heart,
Oft slants his arrow to a warmer part.
But as the years matured that lovely form
Lavona's heart grew large, and her blood grew warm.

IV.

The shades of Vesper o'er Zignoli's roof,
That give to toil their calm night-resting proof,
Brought now Zignoli to his easy chair,
Which long 's been sacred by his evening prayer.
In tones most deep he most divinely prays,
And seeks forgiveness for his sinful days.
The fair Lavona, decked with fillets blue,
And gemm'd and spangled from the head to shoe,

In all the beauty of her glittering ouch,
Reclines, like fairy, on the velvet couch.

V.

The time is past ;—he may, and may not come.
Her fear's increasing in that painful hum.
In the light's broad sheen of reflecting beams
She sees a world amid her world of dreams.
In vain she lists to hear the welcome sound ;
In vain she'd cease to hear that prayer profound.
And as uneasy still her spirit grows,
She looks for joy to only find new woes.
Meantime a balm she has for every pain:
A thousand things in pardon she would feign.
And now, 'tis plain as truth, it is the rain.
He would, no doubt, be here an hour before,
But for the—hark ! Oh ! dear ! that drenching pour.
But still some restless doubts annoyed her breast :
Perhaps this hour he is another's guest.

In eager care she closely ponders o'er
The words he spoke when they had met before.
Oh hateful words ! She well remembers now,
With pulse high-beating and a dancing brow,
He told of faces, with their large blue eyes,
(Where burning passion most serenely lies ;)
What angel forms glowed through the waving dance,
And in love's moulding fell at each sweet glance ;
He pressed her waist, the houri of the ball,
And moaning sighed that this cold press was all.

VI.

With all her love and half forgiveness flown
Lavona turned, sighed, and suppressed a groan.
She'd like to see this idol of the ball,
Whose charms and beauty so bedazzled all.
She wished to see (here she courts her mirror,)
In what—pout, or languish, she was fairer.

VII.

A long, deep prayer, whose accents fell on bread,
And something good for both the heart and head,
Zignoli now on words divine would heap ;
And now his voice would pause, and now would leap,
Which told too plain his prayers resolved to sleep.

VIII.

What hastened red blooms on Lavona's cheek ?
Why does that sudden look so pulseless speak ?
What sound, so sweet, now tinkles on her ear ?
A sound of joy, of hope, but-still of fear.
Why does she stare, and thus on tiptoe linger,
And still the air with lips pressed by her finger ?
He does not move ! He did not hear that bell !
Yet, hold ! That voice ! It is distraction's knell !

Zignoli roused him in a sudden fright :

“ Who rings my bell on such a stormy night ?”

“ Be not disturbed, good father ; keep your chair.

I’ll go direct, and tell you who is there.

You know you should not—must not—move about.

You know, dear father, you have got the gout.”

“ The gout, ha ! Zounds ! I’ll go myself and see

Whom this late visitor may prove to be.

Hold ! Here remain,” he said, and said no more,

His rage to spare till he had reached the door.

IX.

A mixing of love and fear had a dread

That almost wished the good Zignoli dead.

Her prayers would send him to the realms above ;

So rose and fell Lavona’s fluttered love.

X.

That voice ! It is he ! My Mirandu true !
Away restraint, and quick as thought she flew ;
She seized the door—full round its hinges swung.
Flame of love—press—embrace—without a tongue—
The soul of life with maddening rapture wrung—
Around Mirandu's neck her arms she flung.
What dread is here ? What boon could equal this ?
Hot words are cold—no tongue can speak the bliss !

XI.

Zignoli wondered—great his wonder grew
As plainer showed Lavona to his view.
No waste of words. They to the parlor run,
Before one thought, or look, or breath begun
To shake the love which could not brook delay.
But Thought—the fretful night of Pleasure's day—
Its flood-gate loosed upon their sudden calm,
Chilling with fear the heart's celestial balm.

XII.

The wretch who bears with unrelenting chain
A life, (a thousand deaths where freedom's slain,)
Without one dream of hope this side the tomb,
(On either side his woes do cast their gloom,)
That heart—might once a prayer or curse invoke—
Is paralytic from the slaver's yoke.
Such was their love here—a reflective cast
Created thoughts at which they stood aghast.

XIII.

Reflection works reality, and brings
My pensive spirit 'mong those horrid things
Of villain despots, who, in bygone age,
Made brute the ruler in their history's page.
But, lo! is there not in my memory's cell
Buried,—oh! that I must untomb to tell—

Sights to chill the blood, shake the very sense,
And snap the heart-strings with the shock intense.
I've seen in that Eureka of the West—
With crimes and wrongs of every name oppressed—
California,* whose calm, clear, blue sky smiles
To raise up nature from its lowest guiles,
And with a lovely, most enchanting grace,
Snow-white clouds sail o'er its breathing face,
And round the soul a glow of glory winds,
As the bridal ring, when pure love it binds ;
Ah, I have seen, in this most lovely clime,
The helpless culprit, for some trivial crime.
(Stealing bread to appease his starving maw,)
Condemned by jury and consigned by law

* In Marysville, California, a Chinaman received, by order of Court, thirty lashes for stealing fowl. This diabolical punishment was inflicted in the year 1855, in contravention of the laws of the State. But, strange to say, the parties to this peculiarly barbaric justice received the approval, or rather the applause, of many enlightened papers throughout the State. In the same year a horse-thief was branded with hot iron, in compliance with the sentence of the Court of Justice. I understand the latter beastly, brutal, and barbaric punishment is common in some of the Southern States.

To the caitiff lash of degrading hands,
And fiendish torture of the burning brands.

XIV.

Oh, for wings to fly to that patient God,
Whose bounless mercy long hath spared the rod,
And in His vengeance and His justice bring
Command from Him to scourge the crawling thing,
Who'd thus debase, a hell below the brutes,
That form of man which that vile thing pollutes.

XV.

But to my story. Like a fiery colt,
To feel the harness is for him to bolt—
My Muse, no sooner strung unto my will,
Than off she flies and leaves me at the rill.

What Thought had done unto the loving pair
Was last, I think, the burden of my care.
Oh, Thought ! Great master of all nations, Thought !
What good, what ill, this mighty word hath wrought
For one deed that rends the heavens with song,
It makes a thousand cravens worship wrong.
It gives all joy to him who hides its care,
And naught but woe to him who keeps it bare.
The furrowed face, the wrinkle-knitted brow,
That shuns the pleasure Thought would not allow,
Endangers little from the storms that rise
Over joyful hearts when their pleasure dies.
No pang at heart for joy it never knew,
Or memory's tear had faded from its view.

XVI.

Zignoli, heated to a clustered rage,
In fierce and angry questions did engage :

“ Whence comest thou, Sir, with such ardent zeal ? ”

“ Father ! before Heaven and you I kneel ! ”

“ What ! I, Lavona, hark to your appeal ?

Oh, you—No ; were your heart-blood to congeal.

What ! Deceive your father ? No ; 'tis not true ;

My nature chides this horrid thought of you ! ”

XVII.

Mirandu, motionless, gazed, and saw—

What, he could not name, for a certain awe

Brought now to his eyes, to his lips and ears

The heart's pulseless shock of some airy fears.

At last a long drawn sigh Mirandu heaved,

And by its conscious calm was much relieved.

(There is a balm, let it cement or break,

In every sigh that the sad heart may wake.)

He, sadly bound in contemplation's spell,

Motioned his hat, the door, fare—ah, farewell.

But still he paused—he would, but could not go—

His heart was chained to all Lavona's woe.

XVIII.

Like the poor bird that broods her feathering young,
A wayward missile to her nest is flung,
She flies not far, but circling to her care,
Awaits the lull that bids her safely there :—
A furtive glance told part the storm was o'er.
With hand to head a maze of thought upbore,
Resigned Zignoli read the carpet floor.
Mirandu moved toward the shadowed space
Where shone Lavona in dishevelled grace ;
Where drooped a lily 'neath a stormy sky,
Who sighed for death, but, ah, who could not die.
One look he gave—so soft, so mild, so bless'd,
So bathed in love that e'en a wish distress'd.
But she nor spoke, nor moved, nor raised her eyes,
Though she saw that look, and she felt his sighs.
But now, " Oh dear, can I believe my sight ?
Why here comes mother in her robes of night !"

XIX.

She paused, beheld, then knew she was awake,
And, with "hem" erect, the good madam spake :

" Zignoli—

Lavona—tell me, are you all alive?
Who is he? When or whence did he arrive?
Is the house on fire, or was it a dream?
Why, 'tis but now I heard a piercing scream!
Are all the doors locked? How did he get in?
To thus disturb me is an awful sin!
Is Nero chained? The night is wet and dark.
With all this noise I haven't heard him bark.
Sit up straight, Lavona—why so lean o'er?
I told you *so* a thousand times before.
You'll grow round-shouldered. It annoys me quite,
You *will* persist in sitting up at night.
You've grown so pale you really are a fright.
That last music, child—say, how is your throat?
Can you sing with ease, dear, the highest note?

Just think—in three days more—oh, dear me—dear—
Then that critical party will be here.
Till then before your eyes your music keep.
Till you are perfect do not dare to sleep.
And *till* you're perfect when you go to bed
Be sure to place the music 'neath your head.”
Here she stopped. A yawn—a cough—a shiver—
The chill night air had perched upon her liver.

XX.

In weighty thought that almost held him there,
With slowness rose Zignoli from the chair,
And o'er his face a misty mantle hung,
Which darker grew as words pressed to his tongue.
His eyes, like lightning from the pregnant cloud,
Shot forth a flash before he spoke aloud.

XXI.

“I had a book composed of choicest dreams,
Where care basked happy in most hopeful beams.
I’ve had my fortune swept beneath the wave ;
I’ve seen my father in a mad-house rave ;
I’ve wept that in my mother’s dying grief,
Her voice refused me one last word’s relief—
One low, broken sound—the prophetic last,
To tell the mourner all the suffering’s past.
My head was bald before my hair was grey ;
My life reached night before my noontide, day.
All these ills—all, oh and a thousand more,
With heart unbent and fortitude I bore ;
For ’mid the sorrows long I had to grope,
I nurtured that which was my life—a hope.
But now the beauty of its dazzling glare
Is charm twice fatal to this heart’s despair.
And here my gilded castle, raised for years,
Is lost forever in my hopeless tears.
There is your child—behold her face and eyes.
It is love connubial that sobs and sighs.”

XXII.

“ Love connubial ! ’Tis a bad disease.
Hem—are you a doctor, sir—if you please?
Give my Lavona something that will cure.
I’m quite sleepy—this cold I can’t endure.”
The Madam said no more, but left them there,
With faith unbounded in Mirandu’s care.

“ I blot her from my memory—all’s forgot.
She had a secret, and I knew it not.”

XXIII.

His speech here ended by a gelid chain
Of woe’s deep sadness freezing every vein.
Now a moment’s thought, and his memory’s star
Shot through the Past upon its lightning car.

(Sadness e'er brings some pleasures to the view
We ne'er had known but that those pleasures flew.")
The spring of youth comes calmly o'er him now,
And sad, serene, sits on that graven brow.
In searching fondness o'er some maiden's face
He sees those smiles which he were wont to trace.
How sweet her name breathed on the floating air
To crush a wayward thought, or lighten care.
How braved he oft the dark and stormy gale
To tell his boon companion some love tale.
How oft he lingered in the flowery lawn,
Where'er he looked new Edens seemed to dawn.
How oft the rain was mystery to his thought.
What havoc great the Deluge must have wrought.
Old Noah's Ark, for all its freighted charge,
It must have been so very strong and large.
If he some secret knew in seas or skies
How much the whole creation he'd surprise.
Ah shining youth, that speeds with falcon flight
Through the bright morn which glimmers into night,
Seeks the stubble field for the velvet plain,
And wooeth folly for her wanton train—

Lives in the frenzy of each bastard hope
That reeling urges crime-expanding scope :
The more it dashes with unbounded heed,
The more insatiate the passions bleed.
Oh saddening pleasures of a memory past,
That give the soul its former bent and cast.
There, glowed the hope of all the parents' pride ;
There, the precepts through this cold world to guide ;
There, the faithful friend and the honest mind ;
There, the tender heart, that was always kind ;
There, no laugh to conceal the bitter sneer ;
There, no scandal to feast the greedy ear ;
There black Envy ne'er threw its garments round
To shelter those it would the most confound.
Ah, there all things were simple, mild and fair
As scent of roses breathed on summer air.
Oh for an hour of that undying past
For to heave one love, and to breathe my last !

XXIV.

One sweet, yet sad, long look to fading forms
Zignoli gave, then changed to present storms.
His mind from solace o'er his youthful date
Now fleetly turned to all its former state.
Heavy and dead his arms fall by his chair ;
He speaks no word—his stillness is despair.
But Sadness' chain, though strong, is often broke,
When stifled Reason doffs its sable cloak.
Had he, like Neptune in high-billowed seas,
Through life rode smiling at each stormy breeze ?
Had he through cities and through nations sped,
With naught but Hope for shelter and for bread ?
At merry feasts, when all but he were gay,
Had he not sighed for times long passed away ?
Yet, like the wave that dashes o'er the rock,
That stands unmoved the broken surge to mock,
The hardest blast that o'er his head did blow
Was but the murmur of the dying foe.

Now all the blood of all his years' distress
His veins doth swell in vengeful bitterness.

XXV.

“Lavona—to bed—quick—hence—depart,
Pray and weep and break that loving heart.
To-morrow, Miss, commands shall be ordained
To keep that heart in places more restrained.”

“Oh, father dear, will list what I would say?”

‘No talk—no prate—but from my sight away!’

She moved—faltered—again she moved a pace.
To see Mirandu would have turned her face.
A shower of grief all o’er her blanching bloom,
A sigh half-spent—Lavona quits the room.

XXVI.

Zignoli grinned a smile. Mirandu shook ;
There is no favor in that smile and look.

“ Now, ill-starred victim of love’s sprouting youth,
Proceed at once and tell me naught but truth.
Give me thy riches and thy titled name—
What are thy honors, and from whence they came ?”

His voice was weak, and far he had to reach
Below emotions ere he found his speech.

XXVII.

“ Like you, I’m clayed up in my father’s shape.
Whate’er my blood, from clay it can’t escape.
But in mankind we know there is a soul
Distinct from blood, from race, from man’s control.

The obscure wight how oft will rise to fame
Whose generations never had a name !
While men of greatness ever leave behind
A propagation of the pigmy kind.
And oft you'll find, if you the records scan,
That length of ears, not talent, makes the man.
If all men knew their worth, nor less nor more,
The slave would stand where tyrants dare not soar.
My name is not of earth—it is, true Love,
The only proof there is a Heaven above.”

XXVIII.

“ Your name is Love !—Ah—Ahem !
Then you're a rose that has a cankered stem.
If you are Love, pray name what you have done
To claim the hand of her you would have won.
Or are you like that serpent's changing hue,
Whose gloss will turn from white to black or blue ?

Your love is but a passion of the mind,
Which only lives because it is confined.
Let noble manhood all your love bespeak.
Be just and brave in all you do and seek.
Go forth and find some lofty mount and there
(Inhale your soul the pure and God freed air,)
Look above—below—all around—and see
How great, exalted, noble, you should be.
The lightning's flash—ocean's roar—streamlets' flows
Meridian's fire—Zero's glaze—mantling snows—

Your will commands them all.

Then, from this towering hight,
Give the soul, majestic, flight,
And your resolutions rise
Most loftily to the skies,
Till all meanness you'd despise
As a cup of bitter gall."

XXIX.

In glow, in vigor, in aspiring tone,
Zignoli looked a monarch from his throne,
And all the heat of every youthful vow
Warmed to the bays he felt around his brow.

Mirandu bowed, but spoke not, for his heart
Was now too small, his intents to impart.
“ Good night,” he said, no other word he spake,
But saved his speech his thoughts to keep awake.

Well pleased Zignoli forthwith went to bed,
To dream what now might change Lavona’s head.

PART II.

I.

THAT book of solemn thought—the setting sun,
O'er whose red pages fancied demons run,
Closed slow its leaves before Lavona's gaze,
(Though far too soon for her dædalion maze.)
In that small room, where long her sweetest dreams
Mused round on angel wings, and brightest beams
Of love most leal had made each little nook
A nich for idols of bright Lyra's look ;
Yes, in that room, her warming heart's abode,
In every corner now pale phantoms showed ;
Her very moving was so woe-begone
She'd pause and think if she were she alone ;
Or had the spirits, darkly fleeting by,
Made her a vision of their destiny ?

II.

No, no, she was herself ;—her heart again
Bled from the wound where her love was slain.
In measured madness through the room she stalks—
He was a demon first invented locks.
And now her rage is wild beyond control,
And now—and now—(love tempers still the soul,)
She slacks—she halts—she stands like marble death.
No look, no word, no interrupting breath.
As man will stop to see a rocket rise :
The eye goes up among the clouded skies :
The rocket faded and its brightness o'er,
The clouds look darker than they seemed before.
Or like the stranger in a dismal waste :
He spies a light to which he moves in haste.
About, around, the light appears to lead ;
The stranger wonders—urges still his speed.
A swamp is near—the light is waning fast ;
Into the swamp the stranger runs at last.

The light is gone ; the cheat is now too plain,
And night grows sombre with a tenfold pain :
A golden ray would shoot through her dark night
To make Woe's terror plainer to her sight.

III.

'Twas but a moment that Lavona stood
In this pale, calm and cold compressive mood.
Her placid aspect showed that fire within
That burns its strength before its flames begin.
Her fairy hands throw back her flowing hair ;
She sighs, she droops, she seeks her easy chair.
She views the garden ; there, ah there, she sees
An envied freedom in the boughs and trees.
Ah, there, alas ! 'tis scarcely one day past,
Among those walks a passing glance she cast ;
And scarce she noted, in her careless grace,
The twigs and plants, familiar to her face.

But now all things from her lone room appear
Blessed and happy—she feels it with a tear.
She would she were that tall, majestic tree
That forms the vista 'long the garden's lea.
Into a blade of grass, or e'en a toad
She now would change, if freed from her abode.

IV.

The lamp burns dim ; the night is dark and cold,
And dreary fancies through her bosom rolled.
Her heart, now sad and o'ercharged with pain,
Breaks low the stillness with this elling strain :

1.

Oh, weary comes the night,
But sadder comes the morn ;
For who would see the light
With hopes that are forlorn ?

2.

The love I lightly bore,
And fondly would caress me,
If slight its touch come o'er
My heart, 'twill now distress me.

3.

Then die, thou lingering flame
For who can suffer under
The mocking of love's name
When hearts are torn asunder?

4.

And if my memory wake,
Love's last fond look revealing,
Oh, let the mirror break,
Its form of grief concealing.

5.

Oh, who can bear the pangs,
When love unfettered soaring,
On thorny breakers hangs,
The sweets of life outpouring ?

6.

And yet I feel love's pain
Beyond my hope still creeping.
Like sunbeams in the rain,
Love shines while I am weeping.

7.

Ah, when the soul is bound
To some delightful pleasure,
Its shadow or its sound
The joy will far outmeasure.

8.

And thus it is with me :

The heart that now is broken
Leaps raptured to the key
That echoes some love-token.

9.

True joy is only felt

In young, warm Hope's desire ;
Which reached will quickly melt,
As snow before the fire.

10.

Yet, yet, there is a glow

Of love around me stealing,
That, 'mid my grief and woe,
Enwraps me in its feeling.

11.

And oft as I do ponder
O'er smiles long passed away,
I look around, in wonder,
To hear Mirandu say :
" Lavona !"

12.

His voice is on my ear,
And says within my soul
No smiles to me are dear
That he may not control.

PART III.

I.

Along yon hill Mirandu shoots the game.
His gun is raised ; he has an eye to aim.
A limping bird across his pathway flies.
That fire, that smoke—the bird now surely dies.
Before the smoke in vapor pass away,
The faithful dog brings forth the master's prey.
Lest the keen tooth should mar the tender skin,
The wing he holds to bring the booty in;—
Looks at his master—pleased to see him smile—
He bounds and jumps, and scents the bird the while.

II.

Mirandu weighs the bird from hand to hand,
And studies long the fates to understand.

Poor frightened bird, had you no watching friend
To tell the danger of your fatal end ?
These tears of blood beneath your little wing—
The trembling drops to ravaged plumage cling.
What law of nature can man's heart define
That what pains his flesh, will not also thine ?
The soul of man ne'er fears the body's death.
The man must die before the soul has breath.
The soul, immortal, feels no mortal woes.
It is the mortal suffers mortal blows.
If justice rule, it must to all seem plain
That birds and human writhe in equal pain.
Poor, dying bird—that flapping, fluttering wing,
That held the air so oft for you to sing—
(Whose freedom mocked the ruling, sceptered king,)
With that quivering pause, and that flying start
The life-blood ebbs from your wild, restless heart.

III.

Why does Mirandu look with such intent ?
On what can be his eye so fastly bent ?
What's this a thread to wings so closely binds ?
A thousand answers all at once he finds !
By all the virgins ! oh, that I should swear !
It is a letter with Lavona's hair !
Alternate looks absorbed his ravished soul,
O'er which he tried to bring a calm control.
Now on the scroll he'd stare with vacant joy,
And now the hair would all his thoughts employ.
Now this he bosomed with a hasty kiss ;
And that he bosomed 'gain to look on this.
He read the letter, and he read the hair.
Was it the neck the scissiors had laid bare ?
Or that white brow, where fell in sweetest grace
The wanton ringlets to Lavona's face ?

IV.

The fourth day's eve had drooped its lazy pall,
And still no answer to Lavona's call,
But thrilling echoes of the gloomy wall.
The little bird she sent her love to find
Was blown about, perhaps, by every wind.
The doleful grief it bore upon its wing
Gave it a pining death or fatal sting.
(As oft a weight will o'er the bosom rise
At grief or woe discerned in others' eyes.)
Again she must again retire to bed.
What if the opening day should find her dead?
Pale on those sheets her head at ease would rest;
Still as the word Forever unexpressed.
This hand should lay beneath her gentle cheek;
This on her bosom would her chasteness speak.
Ah, then would come her father—mother—all—
To wail and weep their own Lavona's fall.
They'd speak her virtues and recount them o'er,
And then would weep, and name them as before.

Would Mirandu come—ah, would he be here,
To wet her lips with one true mournful tear ?
But, oh, that dismal thought—that awful gloom !
Mirandu lives, and she is in the tomb !
She trembled, shuddered, with a fearful dread—
It was the picture, and not her was dead !

V.

'Tis said that love's immured and cloistered call
Once had sweet succor through a stony wall.
The many wonders oft performed by love
Its mission proves had sacred birth above.
Many a guise we o'er this passion find,
Which has most sight when most we deem it blind.
In every mode true love will find a tongue,
And now to savory meat its arrow 's hung.
A knife—a fork—is raised in either hand ;
And o'er the bird Lavona holds command.

Who sent this bird, in such peculiar style ?
That smerky toss now answers, with a smile ;
‘ Ha, my teasing woer, good Doctor Groot.
Well, I loved him once, but—he did not suit.
Of course, if nothing better I could find,
Loosely with him a marriage I would bind.”
(When maids are warm, howe’er their hearts may
 bleed,
Rejected suitors serve in time of need.)
But now good Doctor Groot I’ll leave behind,
Till Venus will more favor for him find.

VI.

A joint is parted. She shook—not with fear,
But with that joy which sometimes drops a tear ;
When the soul’s ray will dazzle with delight,
The senses cheat, and reel the very sight.
Oh, what tongue can tell, or what heart can feel,
As the note she clutched, and she broke the seal,

The giddy work of elements combined
That flashed and lightened in Lavona's mind ?
Hushed in one stare was every eager thought !
The schemes, the plans, her loved Mirandu wrought !
And the strange fate the bird to him had sent !
Was it by chance, or the Omnipotent ?
Light as the heart of sickness dire relieved ;
Joyed as the man whose sentence is reprieved ;
Loving as wife for an East India shawl ;
Gay as a belle preparing for a ball ;
She laughed with joy, and frolicked with delight,
And bade her room good night—a long good-night.
There is no sound but what she does rejoice ;
There is no breeze but breathes Mirandu's voice.

VII.

There is a star away in yonder sky ;
A thousand forms it gives Lavona's eye.

In bridal robes she sees a nuptial train,
As seraphs pure, enter the solemn fane.
And joining round, they in a circle stand
Before the priest, and wait on his command.
The bride is blessed, and the ritual read,
And bride and bridegroom now are closely wed.

VIII.

But now the church is dark, and standing there,
With pallid features and dishevelled hair,
And trembling, shaking, with a horrid fear,
With cheeks deep-furrowed by the burning tear,
In long, black garments, frightfully arrayed,
The wretched wife, who was but now a maid.
And round her hurrying, without limb or head,
A thousand elves, which change from black to red.
How dark, how black, is now the stifled air !
Now through the fane how sheets of lightning glare !

A demon now the altar makes his throne,
From whose red tongue are hissing serpents blown ;
And round the bride they seem to warp and sting.
She gave one shriek that made the heavens ring,
And vanished hence, in a sulphurous blaze,
Which closed in awe Lavona's frighten'd gaze.

IX.

The cautious step that through the garden steals
Close in her heart the fondest hope reveals.
Against the wall the ladder high is laid,
And quick descends the loved and loving maid.
The car 's now reached, and the order given,
" Drive to the fane—impel with speed to heaven !
Lay on the whip, and slack the curbing reins.
You know my wish, and so conceit your gains."
In meek assent the servant bowed his head,
And o'er the stones the car now swiftly sped.

Seated within—Mirandu and his prize—
And danger o'er by two long, heavy sighs,
The lovers clasp, and 'neath the passioned kiss
Sweet melts the soul in dreams of future bliss.
Lavona smiles, and moans and drops a tear,—
Her very joy creates a fancied fear.
Again the kissing passion is renewed ;
Again the soul is melted and subdued.
Now slower grows the rattling of the wheel.
A moment more and at the altar kneel
Mirandu and Lavona. Oh, how long
It takes the priest to find the wedding song.
A question 's asked—some words are mumbled o'er,
And hearts are twinned to love till life 's no more.
How slight the whisper that so strongly binds
The fluttering heart of some unconscious minds !
But then how brief—how very brief, the day
Till all the fancied charms have passed away !
The heart should know, and prove before 'tis wed
The lasting merits of its future bed.

X.

The burning comet, with its flaming tail,
The weak-eyed stars obscures beneath its trail,
And darts its torch in every planet's face,
As if to taunt that planet with disgrace.
But soon the torch expires—no trails remain,
And sun, and moon, and stars appear again.
Thus oft we hear of some great wedding fête :
The bridal dress—the bridegroom's marshal gait—
The pomp, the riches of the joyful pair ;
How much the neck the charming bride laid bare ;
If high the cut, some dames would have it short ;
Twas not to hide the bosom, but—a wart.
If low the cut, she is the boldest jade—
Once blooming charms lie withered in the shade.)
How many bonnets, and how many gowns,
And the satin drawers brought from Hindoo towns ;
How many diamonds glittered on her head,
And what a Venus she must seem in bed !

How lay each ringlet, and how comb'd each hair,—
How round the arms!—how white and plump and
fair!

All this and more the vulgar have to share ;
Till all bedazzled, upward straight they fly
Astride of rainbows, till they kiss the sky.*
Once Hymen gave us just three lines in print.
Well, we kissed our spouse, smiled and were content,
And half-begrudged the vulgar eye should read
The holy tie which those few lines decreed.

* This latter fancy is not original. I am indebted for it to a certain Madame Howe, who, it will be remembered, gave to the New York people, a few years ago, a dramatic production, in which her meteoric flights were very copious. In fact there was nothing mundane in the production ; the gratifying effect of which modestly induced her to acknowledge to her admirers that she eclipsed Shakespeare. We find her in some parts, riding on the rainbow, making a ladder of the lightning, and going to bed to the sun.

XI.

But now the dash, the glare, the wondrous blaze,
Some wrinkled hag, or foolish swain will raise !
The wealth, the splendor, and the ducks, and swans,
And the prettiest pigs, from the rarest spawns ;
The champagne—the gin—and the oldest wine,
And spotted trouts, on which the gods might dine.
'Tween two heavens the nuptials seem to poise,
And call on earth for to admire their joys.
But now what conduct strange is this we hear ?
Does Hymen's song dissolve in such a jeer ?
The golden sky is changed to dooming clouds,
And snow-white robes become black, mourning
shrouds.

While those shine out with calm and steady ray
Whose nuptials never knew of such display.

PART IV.

I.

IN that white villa, far from where the lights
The city sprinkle, and the noise affrights,
Shameless Cupid adds fuel to his fire,
And burns Mirandu with a mad desire ;
And as he lives in her soft, melting eyes,
And looks on charms which breathe endearing sighs,—
That neck—that bosom—full in every part,—
Softly glowing over a fluttering heart—
He dreams—it is real—yes, yes—ah, he burns,
And to its wonted flow his blood returns.
All passion now has fled his vigorous frame,
And flesh and marble are to him the same.
What does it reck him if her love-lit soul
Now pines for pleasures he could not control.

II.

It so went out (methinks it is untrue,)
That Cupid painted both their faces blue.
But in Mirandū some strange nature ruled,
And morning dawned without one passion cooled.
Lavona sighed, and wept, and cursed her fate,
And viewed Mirandu with a loathing hate.
Love of the heart will do in time of need,
But hers was that on which the passions feed.
Love is lost in nature's sweet conjunction
When nature fails to perform its function.
Who'd blame her rage if on her wedding night
Her husband proved a weak hermaphrodite ?

III.

A fire now rushed through every swelling vein,
Like flames that sweep along the grassy plain.

But flame ne'er raged without a dying hour,
Nor thing e'er lived without a ruling power.
Sick on her bed she dreamed each hour away,
Till a new life seemed on her face to play.
She called Mirandu feebly to her side,
And for a time to speak she vainly tried.
She drew a breath, and from it came—"My dear!
I am not well—pray how do I appear?"

"As well, my angel, as you always do,
Save round your eyes there is a dusky blue.
But that, my pet, is a peculiar mark,
Known but to those who labor in the dark."

"Ah, you're a poor physician. If you knew
How weak, indeed, my sinking spirits grew,
You'd be—but I may—(here she paused for breath,)
I may get better—but then—I fear death."

"Then, my angel, name what you'd have done,
And my good legs will at your bidding run!"

"Indeed, I feel much better—you're so kind.
My good physician, dear, I wish you'd find.
His name is Carlos D'Este Emdee Groot.
Of all diseases he well knows the root."

IV.

Did he look at his collar or jabots?
Or if he wore his boots or chamber shoes?
Tut, not he! In this case of sad distress
The good Mirandu had no time to dress.
But with his hat half clinging to his head,
In hurried haste he for the doctor sped.

V.

Before ten flaps of the white flagging sail,
That fills and empties with the curving gale,

With pleasing jokes and frisky as a rat,
Beside Lavona's bed the doctor sat.
"He came—he saw." He had in every look
An eye to see the cure he undertook.
With winks and smiles the sickest he could cheer,
And was, as ladies say, a "perfect dear!"
He had a glow, a beauty, and a grace
Which gave new life where'er he turned his face,
And round him shone a circle of love's fire
Which women worship and the gods admire.
He had that form we image in our mind
We never look for, and we rarely find.
But if it happen that such form appears
Then we have known it well full fifty years.

VI.

He felt Lavona's pulse, which beat and throbbed
Like a wild beast of all his freedom robbed.

He was no quack, and became no mourner
That he was not just six minutes sooner.
And shade his face with a gloom of sorrow,
With "Take my pills, or you'll die to-morrow."
Nor stuffed with knowledge, show a massive mind,
Which drops a word that cannot be defined.
Of all the jacks and apes beneath the sun
I hate that fool whose wisdom weighs a tun.

VII.

Some minds flow smoothly as the limpid brook,
And careless toss a word in every nook,
Carrying off the rubbish of the brain,
And letting naught but purity remain.
But there are minds, that, like the stagnant pond,
Ne'er send a stream their rancid bounds beyond,
Until the fetid brain breeds grubs and gnats,
Toads and lizards, bats, mice and water rats.

A jovial wit in man I'd rather find
Than all his stupid majesty of mind.
I've ever proved the man of large pretense
Lacked that mild ingredient—Common Sense.
The dullest ass we meet upon the road
Endures the meanest and the grossest load.
Ignorantly bold on these minds will sit
For self-importance, learning and for wit.
Mad fanatics—like raging dogs insane,
Froth, foam and bite in writhing, gnashing pain.

Sometimes we see, as on we pass,
Besieged some garbage or dull ass,
And think the flies devouring there
With mad fanatics well compare.
The more the smell, the more the sores,
The more the flies flock there in scores.

VIII.

Of all the fools, the most horrid asses
Are those whose weight bears down poor Pegasus.
Their thoughts but glimmer like the fainting light—
The more they're viewed the more they fade from sight.
Who gaze at stars but blinking in the sky
While bright and burning ones are blazing nigh ?
The red, the glowing, and the fiery ball
Will give a pleasure and delight to all.
But when some blockhead cannot shoot a ray,
A twilight ghost, he dreads the light of day ;
And feebler minds his shadow oft befools
In the wondrous maze of ambiguous rules.
And there are some whose outward structure seems
As if constructed by the richest beams ;
But if to enter you might deem it meet,
The structure falls—the gilding's at your feet.
If you're at leisure, or can spare the time,
Peruse that—something Stedman put in rhyme.

The lines are fashioned like a Chinese junk—
Each end is raised, but lo ! the middle's sunk
They rise and fall with a peculiar gush,
Like *feet* outwearied in the snowy slush.
To read them once, you ne'er would read again ;
The very thought would give emetic pain.
Let those then know who'd up Parnassus start,
The Instinct's language is the poet's part.

IX.

But to my theme. Carlos had felt her pulse,
And asked some things which would a maid convulse ;
But did they her ? No, no, for she was married,
And all his questions with a smile she parried.
It was a smile she might in vain disguise,
For love had flushed her cheek and filled her eyes.
Now both conversed ;—he felt her pulse again.
Still raged her fever with increasing pain.

They spoke with sadness of their former love,
When each agreed it was His will above.
But as their love grew strong, their words grew weak ;
And both now suffered what they could not speak.
But as they loved, alas, the bed gave way,
And sheets give license to the glaring day.

X.

But, lo ! ye gods ! Who saw that mirror roof,
Which o'er the bed retains unfading proof,
When from the sun it hath a genial ray,
Of how nude Cupid teaches man to pray.
The mirror now doth such a picture lend
As makes the hair of husbands stand on end.
Here the sheets seem leaping to the pillow,
And there recede, like the sinking billow,
And every other shade of amorous play
The mirror holds in lewd and bold array.

For years Mirandu held this mirror dear,—
(It was a gift his father did revere,)
And well he knew the sum of labor done
Whene'er it kissed a twinkle of the sun.

XI.

And now the props, the bolts, the broken springs
Were joined again, with many cords and strings:
To fix the bed the fair Lavona tore
Every string from every gown she wore.
Of course the doctor worked with zeal, but then—
In bed arrangements women teach the men.
(To every thing the woman lends a grace ;
She'll make unseemly seemly to your face.)
Now all things seeming settled, calm and meet,
Again Lavona glowed beneath the sheet.
With many a sigh and crushed sob at heart
To other patients Carlos must depart.

XII.

It is true as Gibraltar is a rock,
A night of love will give a hungry shock ;
And though Mirandu's labor was in vain,
Tired his legs, and dizzy was his brain,
To every dish he cried out—" Amavi !"
Till the stomach muttered forth—" Peccavi !"
Having ate, drank and felt himself regaled,
The servants all with strict commands he hailed.
(The stomach gorged to a luxurious fill,
Becomes the monarch of a bounteous will.)
He gave the servants all to understand
The cherub lips which each nice dish demand.

XIII.

Now close beside the sick Lavona's bed
Compliant servants stand with dishes spread.

Mirandu near, a grievous look he shown,
And sighed " My dearest," in a tender tone ;
" What says the Doctor ? Do you still complain ?
Oh, where, my angel, is the cruel pain ?"

XIV.

She rolled her eyes and cast a languid look,
And of each dish a quiet gaze she took.
(A question oft will ope the door to Thought,
By whose quick lead some hundred soon are caught ;
As when we see the herd unlock the gate :
To enter first the ewes are shy, and wait ;
But soon as the ram dashes boldly through,
With skips and jumps follow lamb and ewe.
Thus oft a hundred questions are in vain ;
They reach the ear, but never pass the brain.
But touch the thought that holds the present sway,
A hundred more will follow in its way.)

XV.

When she was asked of what she did complain,
Hunger increased, and food engrossed the brain.
But she maintained serenity on her face,
And careless waved her arm to show her grace.
Her beauty seemed of such angelic birth,
It was a marvel that she dwelt on earth.
But with her sweetness and bewitching skill
Her blood commercial flows and burns at will.
Still she dallies thoughts upon her fingers,
Still her answer to Mirandu lingers.
Her naughty acts appear before her sight
As if they lived, and breathed, and loved the light.
And as she takes a close and searching view
They are so plain that others see them too.

XVI.

She had still an ache, and—'twas no matter ;
After dining she'd perhaps feel better.
She had a pain, and—well, it would go 'way,
“ Pray what's the time ? Why I'm a-bed all day.”
With half-raised head she mutely did require
That all the servants should at once retire.
Then from the bed Lavona slowly drew,
And coughed and groaned to make her sickness true.
Before her mirror all her charms are shown :
“ Well, I declare ! how very pale I've grown !”

XVII.

Now in respect for nature's hungry laws
Close to the board the fair Lavona draws.
The cup she raises, and like fairy sips ;
The bread they touch seems not to pass her lips.

Mirandu's happy thus to see the dame
From sickness dire so soon her health reclaim.

From now till ten (the time they both retired,)
I will not name the trifles that transpired.
Suffice it that, whate'er was said or done,
Embraced they slept until the morning sun.

XVIII.

Oh, Mars ! Oh, Cupid ! Gods of love and war !
Why does Mirandu his own sense abhor ?
Where is the life that warmed his manly face ?
What doth his eye so fiercely, madly trace ?
Why turn his lips from red to deadly pale ?
What wrongs he feels conjure a bloody tale ?
Cold are the limbs that press that hated bed.
Chilled is the soul, whose happiness is fled.
His brain 's a cloud, which o'er the body rains,
And raging madness freezeth into chains.

XIX.

Determined vengeance now his blood revives,
And he, to crush his fury, calmly strives.
He rubbed his eyes ; again he gave a look
To make him sure he could not be mistook.
But plainer still the magic mirror shown,
And greater yet Lavona's guilt is grown.
He raised his hand,—it fell upon his breast—
A dagger then had sunk him into rest.
That vengeful raising and that vengeful fall
At once determined and decided all.
Out from the bed he leaped—his voice was still,
(For words are few when deadly is the will,
He had no thought save one—it was to kill.

XX.

The keys are found, and now the drawer's unlocked.
Here's the dagger, and there the pistol cocked.
He raised his head and asked his God above
To witness how he slew his guilty love.

This dagger—this cold steel in that fair breast,
And then—the pistol will send *me* to rest.
The right hand's raised—the stroke is now prepared
His step's so slow as if his courage dared.
His left hand's stretched in stillness calm to keep
The guardian angels of Lavona's sleep.

XXI.

Like something purer than the whitest snow—
Like seraph rapt in God's high altar's glow—

With raven tresses o'er her full round neck,
And spotless lace to keep her charms in check,
Lavona lay, like Innocence, asleep—
Her very beauty made Mirandu weep.

XXII.

A step—a halt—great God, can that be guilt?
The avenger—this—even to the hilt?
He turned—he saw—but quick his head is bent.
It was—oh nothing, but—bewilderment.
But though he wished to see that sight no more,
It held possession of his inmost core.
Against his will his head again he raised.
His mind is frantic, and his eye is glazed.

XXIII.

His mother's picture ! Oh, how calm ! how mild !
And at her knee the likeness of her child !
Ah, she is dead, and he to manhood grew.
In woman's blood could he his hands imbrue ?
Oh far more blessed to give repentance time,
Than send to God the sinful in their crime.
If one must die, his own 's the life to take,
And spare the guilty for the guiltless' sake.

XXIV.

With this he drove the dagger to his heart,
And plucked it out before he felt the smart.
He reeled—he tossed—across the bed he fell,
(That bed—that torture, worse to him than hell.)
Lavona roused her in a piercing yell.

“Blood! Oh horror!” Another shriek she gave.
The dying echo ope’d Lavona’s grave!
And as her spirit winged its flight above,
It saw the mirror of her faithless love.

END.

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